

Abstract

Are Cerebrovascular and Cardiovascular Diseases among Employees Work-related?

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Cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are a major cause of deaths among workers as well as in general population in Korea. The term "Karoshi" in Japan represents work-related cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases (WR-CVD) due to excessive overwork. According to the Karasek's Demand-Control Model many prospective studies reported a significant association between working in jobs with high strain and increased likelihood of subsequent development of cardiovascular diseases. However, further understanding of the etiopathology of each different work-relatedness is needed to prevent WR-CVDs effectively. This review was planned to help the readers with knowledge on the etiopathology of the WR-CVDs. Based on the causal or triggering factors, work-relatedness in the literature can be classified into four types: 'accidental type (e.g. sudden cardiac deaths)', 'typical Karoshi type due to extreme overwork', 'maladaptation type due to dramatic change in job characteristics', and 'job stress type due to inherent characteristics'. Even though the outcome of each type is apparently similar, their causes and pathophysiologic mechanisms are quite different. In conclusion, the work-relatedness of CVDs among employees is very limited and usually works as a trigger rather than as the causal factors. A thorough understanding of the etiopathology of WR-CVDs can be very helpful in developing a prevention strategy.

Key Words: Work-relatedness, Cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases, Coronary artery disease, Acute coronary syndrome, Review, Karoshi, Job Stress

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Table 1

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Table 1. Comparison between Risk Factors causing 'Karoshi' in Japan and Job Stress Factors in the West

Common workplace stressors in the West (Davidson, 1981)	Risk Factors causing 'Karoshi' in Japan (Criteria for WR-CVD, revised on Dec 12, 2001) (Park, 2002)
<p>Organizational Change Inadequate communication Interpersonal conflict Conflict with organizational goal</p> <p>Career development Lack of promotional opportunity New responsibilities beyond level of training Unemployment</p> <p>Role Role conflict Role ambiguity Inadequate resources to accomplish job Inadequate authority to accomplish job</p> <p>Task Quantitative and qualitative overload Quantitative and qualitative underload Responsibility for the lives and well-being of others Low decision-making latitude</p> <p>Work environment Poor aesthetics Physical exposures Ergonomic problems Noise Odors Safety hazards</p> <p>Shift work</p>	<p>Heavy workload: Long work hours</p> <p>Other risk factors than work hours: Irregular work hours Long bound work hours Frequent business trips Shift work and night work Work environment (high temperature, low temperature, noise, time difference) Task requiring mental strain, and so on</p>

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Table 2. Four different types of Work-relatedness of CVD

Type	Job stressor action period	Mechanism of CAD/ ACS	Work-relatedness
1	within 24 hours, especially within 1 hour after the unexpected episode	manifestation of ACS by abrupt overload of circulatory function due to severe emotional stress or physical exertion	triggering
2	usually within 1 week exposed continuously to extreme overwork	manifestation of ACS by breakdown of physiological functions (autonomic nerve functions) due to cumulated physical fatigue (*typical Karoshi)	triggering
3	maladaptation period to dramatic changes in job characteristics (usually within 1~3 months)	manifestation of ACS by cumulated extreme mental stress due to maladaptation in new job	triggering
4	long-term period for over 10 years	development and precipitation of CAD by mental stress from inherent characteristics of the usual job (e.g.: shift work or night work, driving work as an occupation)	causing or triggering

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